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Final section of Route 1 on schedule for 2003 opening

by Ryan Kelley
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Orange barrels and mounds of dirt on Route 13 between Smyrna and Odessa are actually signs that the final stage of the 14-year Route 1 project will soon be finished.

The Smyrna-to-Odessa section is right on target for the planned completion date at the end of 2003, according to Delaware Department of Transportation Spokesman Mike Williams.

Williams said that work is currently "moving along smoothly," including the construction of two bridges across Route 13 between Smyrna and Townsend.

He also said the \$76 million price tag for this 7.6 mile stretch should stay put, too.

"On the dollar amount we're very close," said Williams. However, he added that in any construction project, there is always the possibility for added costs because of unforeseen circumstances or market fluctuations on the prices of materials.

This final section of Route 1 will include five new bridges, seven stormwater management ponds, and 170 acres of new wetlands. Environmental regulations mandate that wetlands filled because of construction must be replaced at a 2-to-1 ratio, two acres of new wetlands created for every one that is filled.

As for the large mounds of dirt near Fieldsboro and Pine Tree Corner near Townsend, they will be shrinking as the project is completed. The mounds — an estimated one million cubic yards of soil — were primarily from excavations during construction between the C&D Canal and Odessa. DelDOT stored the dirt from that part of the project at the site near Fieldsboro to be used during the final phase of the road.

The Smyrna-to-Odessa section is the last stage of a four-part project that began in 1989 with bridges being built over

the area that was then proposed to be Route 1. The first section, which runs from Smyrna to Dover, opened in 1993. The second section opened in 1995 including a new bridge over the C&D Canal, along with the highway to Tybouts Corner, near the Christiana Mall, connecting with Interstate 95. The most recent section, running from the canal to Odessa, opened in

November 1999.

When completed, the highway will be the largest public works project in the history of the

state, spanning nearly 46 miles from Interstate 95 to the Dover Air Force Base. The toll-road is being built as an alterna-

tive to Route 13 without stoplights for long-distance and regional travelers, including travelers to the beach.